

The Storm on the Lake
(Father's Day)
12th Sunday of the Year
Mark 4:35-41
June 21, 2015

Several years ago I attended a seminar on religious experience where a woman shared this story:

A few years before this incident occurred her life had been rather settled. She had been happily married, her children were grown and on their own, and she and her husband were running a successful business together. Then it all fell apart. Her husband, a recovering alcoholic, began to drink. Within two years, they had lost everything, including each other. Their business went bankrupt, they lost their house, and their marriage fell apart. She moved to a new city and took a new job, but the pain of what she had lost lingered and she found herself constantly depressed and joyless as she sought to sink new roots, meet new people, and begin over again in mid-life.

Her frustration culminated one evening when, having worked late, she was driving home and stopped for a red light. While waiting for the light to change she was hit from behind by a drunken driver. (The irony wasn't lost on her.)

Her car was badly damaged and she, suffering from whiplash and a series of cuts and bruises, was taken to hospital by ambulance.

After several hours of x-rays, examinations, and medical treatment, near midnight, she was released, to be driven home by a policeman.

As they drove up to her townhouse she noticed that the front door was wide open.

Getting out of the car she realized that her home had been ransacked and vandalized. It was the last straw:

All that penned up frustration, anger, loss, and grief finally burst, she lost control, began to scream hysterically, and ran across the lawn shouting curses at God and life in general—the policeman chasing her.

The first Christian creeds had only one line: Jesus is Lord! Ultimately that says enough, says it all.

As she recalled this, she told us that she remembered exactly what was running through her mind as she ran across that lawn at midnight, hysterical, cursing, a policeman giving chase.

Her anger and her questions were about God: “Where is God in all of this?

Why is God letting this happen?

Why is God asleep?” Then, just as she heard her own curses as an answer, suddenly, in one instant, everything became calm.

She ceased running, stopped shouting, because she felt inside of herself a flood of calm and a peace such as she had never experienced in her life before. No magic lights went on, no divine voices were heard, and she made no claims of “miracle” afterwards, but, for one second she realized that, no matter the storm, no matter the loss, and no matter death itself, God is still in charge of this universe.

One second of realization was all it took. Calm returned. She sent the policeman home and began cleaning up her house. She has essentially remained in that calm since.

The Synoptic gospels record the story of Jesus calming the waters during a storm on the lake.

As Mark has it: With the coming of evening that same day, Jesus said to them, “Let us cross over to the other side.” And leaving the crowd behind they took him, just as he was, in the boat; and there were other boats with him.

Then it began to blow a gale and the waves were breaking into the boat so that it was almost swamped. But he was in the stern, his head on a cushion, asleep.

They woke him and said to him, “Master do you not care? We are going down!”

And he woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Quiet now! Be calm!” And the wind dropped, and all

was calm again. Then he said to them, “Why are you so frightened? How is it that you have no faith?” They were filled with awe and said to one another: “Who can this be? Even the wind and sea obey him.” (Mark 4:35-41).

The parallel between these two stories is clear. The deeper lessons contained within them though are perhaps less obvious, at least during the more stormy moments in our lives. In essence, both stories tell us that God is still in charge of this universe, every counter-indication notwithstanding.

The first Christian creeds had only one line: Jesus is Lord! Ultimately that says enough, says it all. God still rules, even in death and darkness.

But, as these stories also make clear, during the stormy moments of life, when our very souls are in fear of drowning, it will seem like God is asleep, comfortable, his head on cushion.

But, and this is the real challenge of these stories, calm is only a second of realization away.

What calms the storm in life is not that all of our problems suddenly disappear but that, within them, we realize that, because God is still in charge, all will be well—whiplash, bruises, ransacked houses, alcoholic spouses, lost houses, lost jobs, loneliness, and the shadow of death itself notwithstanding.

All will be well because, even asleep with his head on a cushion, God is still lord and yes He is still in Charge

"Stuff you need to Know"

Some thoughts shared by Fr. Ron Rolheiser and of course some by me through the power of the Holy Spirit.